

The Day Ahmad Kharal Fell

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It was Sept 21, 1857, when a I bard or a folk poet of dholas had said:

(With the fall of Ahmad (Khan Kharal), Britain has tried to lower the head of Punjab). On that day, Ahmad Khan was shot dead in the battlefield of Noorey di Dall (Gishkori in Okara district) while he was saying his afternoon prayers. And for the poet, Ahmad Khan was a martyr who had joined the Imam (of Karbala). But that was not the end of unarmed struggle of the people on both sides of the Ravi and on the right bank of the Sutlej where Wattoos had refused to pay taxes to the British employees who had invaded Lakho and arrested many villagers. Their livestock were also driven away. That happened in the first week of July, 1857. That was the actual beginning of the rebellion of the local Muslims against the British authority, and that was led by Ahmad Khan Kharal, a chief of Jhamara on the right bank of the Ravi.

Who was Ahmad Khan Kharal? A British compiler of the Montgomery Gazetteer says: “Ahmad was the man above average – bold and crafty. It was the man who roused the tribes. All important tribes of the Ravi rose. The first real precursor of the storm that was brewing occurred on the night of July 26 in the shape of an outbreak in Gogera District Jail. (Gogera, now in Okara district, was the headquarter of Montgomery district which then comprised the areas of Okara, Pakpattan and Sahiwal). This appears to have been, in all probability, the work of Ahmad Khan.

Reliable information was received with the effect that Ahmad with a large body of Wattoos had retreated into a jungle near Gishkori, some six miles south of Gogera. Capt Black was sent to the area with a detach ment of cavalry to destroy them. He was joined by Lt Chichester. A skirmish took place in which the cavalry had to retreat. They were, however, rallied and Ahmad together with Sarang, chief of the Begka Kharals, was killed.” But that was not the whole story which, if started from July 26 ended on Sept 21. It continued even after the fall of Mughals in Delhi. Even one of the important civil servants, Berkeley, was killed two days after the death of Ahmad Khan. According to the poets of Dholas, it was Berkeley who invited Ahmad Khan, Sarang and other tribal chiefs just after the outbreak in Meerut and asked them to provide recruits and horses to be sent to troubled areas. A piece of a dhola:

Berkeley says: Provide me with horses and men, Rai Ahmad and I will secure a citation for you from London.

Rai Ahmad says: No one in his life ever shares wives, land and mares with others.

Ahmad and Sarang refused pointblank and went back to their village Jhamar.

The deputy commissioner of Gogera writes to Maj Hamilton, commissioner (as I have already) described the outbreak which had occurred during the previous night at the Gogera jail. Considerable loss of life took place on the occasion among the prisoners, but the time was not for hesitation. The prisoners were in a savage state of excitement, and I found that Ahmad Khan had just fled from the station "Mr Berkeley was sent in the meantime with 20 horsemen to capture, if possible, Ahmad Khan before he had crossed the Ravi opposite to his village Jhamara Then I received a note from Berkeley that he had not succeeded in intercepting Ahmad Kharal ... Ahmad Khan has become the king of the country. Then the chief (Ahmad Khan Kharal) himself made the appearance, and in reply to Berkeley's threats informed him that he had pronounced his allegiance to the British government and considered himself a subject of the king of Delhi, from whom he had received orders to raise the whole country. His followers thereupon began a matchlock fire ..." Dhola about this incident says:

(The British have burnt down tenements on both banks of the Ravi. Then came the dwelling of a Faqir Mastana which was also set to fire. They say: "We have to burn down Jhamara and bulldoze the town." The deputy commissioner of Gogera reports to the Multan commissioner:

The first information of the intended insurrection was brought to me by Sarfraz Khan Kharal of Kamaliya on the night of Sept 16. He insisted on seeing me at about 11pm stating that he had something of great importance to communicate, and on being admitted, informed that all chiefs of Ravi tribes, who were present at the Sadar on heavy muchalkas had fled with all their followers, and that there could be no doubt that they intended to rise immediately." Sarfraz Khan Kharal's spying mission was successful and he along with chiefs from Multan like Sadiq Mohammad Khan Badozai, Murad Shah Gardezi, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Makhdooms of Pakpattan, Machhia and Bahawal of Ningrrials (Langrrials), Jeevey Khan of Akbar, Murad Shah of Dola Bala, Sardar Shah of Khanda and Gulab Ali Chishti of Tibbi Lal Beg were duly compensated for their "meritorious services" to the British.

احمد خان شہید ہو یا تاں سر پنجاب دے نوں

برطانے چا گھتیا اے ہتھ

نماز پڑھدے رائے احمد نوں

گلاب رائے بیدی ماری اے گولی

اگانیہہ وی رلے ہن، سنگ امام دے

کدھی دریادی اتے، انگریز جھگے چیاں دے

پھوک مواتے لائے

اگانیہہ لائی اگ مستانے فقیر نوں

جھگڑے اوہدے وی چاہیں ساڑے

آکھے: اگ جھامرے وی لاؤنی

نالے چھڈنے ڈھاچو بارے